

As a tax-paying concerned citizen of the state of Hawai'i, I would like to oppose the suggested lowering of the FAA flight altitude regulations. Allowing aircraft to fly at lower altitudes degrades our state and community visually, audibly, and environmentally. Even as the rules stand today, they are still too lenient. I propose to maintain or increase the current minimum altitude, eliminate exemptions from the altitude rule, and give the state and National Park Service the ability to restrict tour over-flights from state and national parks and wilderness areas. Anyone who has ever been in wilderness or rural areas (meaning anywhere outside of Honolulu), can see (and hear) the disturbing and exploitative effects of low-flying aircraft. On an environmental level, it is a no-brainer to place heavy restrictions on aircraft altitudes. Hawai'i's unique isolation and biology meant that native species evolved without such unnatural sounds, vibrations, and dangers. Given the extreme degradation of the native physical environment, aircraft disturbances only compound the problems facing Hawai'i's environment. Example: a golden eagle drifted to Kaua'i in the 1980s and might have established a native eagle population (which once existed prehistorically), if given the time to establish. Unfortunately, a low-flying tour helicopter hit it. In addition, noise from air tours is not only an annoyance for hikers and campers seeking a wilderness experience, but it can be fatal for Hawaii's forest birds. Repeated disruptions interrupt courtship and mating activities, nest-building, and searching for food, leading to higher mortality rates or abandonment of habitat. Thank you for your time and consideration.